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## Should Africa end costly funerals?

### Should the culture of feasting at funerals be banned?

An Anglican Bishop in Uganda caused a stir last July when he publicly denounced the practice saying it was a form of corruption that impoverishes the bereaved families.

The bishop made the remarks during the funeral of a poor widow whose son was forced to slaughter the only milk cow he owned in order to prepare a decent meal for the mourners.

In some African countries, it is not unusual for a funeral to last for three days or more.

But with the increasing death toll due to HIV/Aids in Africa, is it time to stop hosting elaborate funerals merely to appease mourners?

**The BBC's Africa Live programme asks: Do we spend too much burying the dead in Africa?**

**Do we care more for the dead than the living?**

*This debate is now closed. A selection of your comments appears below*



Funerals are a costly business for relatives

**VOTE RESULTS**

Do we spend too much on burying the dead?

**Yes**

88%

**No**

12%

**1901 Votes Cast**

Results are indicative and may not reflect public opinion

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My mum died 5 years ago and a friend give me 200\$ I did ask what for. She said for your Mum. Why you didn't give her when she was alive.

***Ama Uprichard, from ghana***

The BBC should have been intellectually honest on this subject by referring to the seminal work of one of Africa's preminent intellectual, Mr. Celestin Monga, currently a Senior Economist at the World Bank in Washington, who wrote several articles on the economic cost of funerals in the early 1990s. See Jeune Afrique Economie no. 168, June 19993, page 9, and Afrique 2000 no. 21, April-June 1995. I also remember reading an English version of a paper he presented at the University of Chicago in 1993 on "Coffins, Orgies, and Sublimation: Mismanaging the Economy of Death".

***Neil Milungu, Zambia***

Why not? A relative only dies once. So if you can afford it why not have a lavish funeral? I don't see anything wrong with it.

***Phyllis, Zimbabwe***

The answer is yes. Ethiopians have already restricted funerals to be held only after work hours and mourning periods to be severely curtailed. I also propose that Africans in big urban areas should be offered cremation as an alternative to rapidly shrinking burial sites in big cities.

***Alula, G, Ethiopian/USA***

I say NO because it goes hand in hand with beliefs and culture. We believe that it keeps the ties between the living and the dead. There are many other reasons for funeral in the part of Africa where I come from. It is not simply 'feasting'.

***Aguer Deng, Australia***

I think it is an issue of westernization. The coffins and loud music with expensive foreign drinks are not African. Lets go back to our positive roots.

***Azongo., Ghana***

What a sensible and meaningful debate especially from African church leaders. This reminds me my experience of a mother who didn't want to look after her own sick son (because he was dying from an Aids related disease) and on his funeral she spent the last penny she had and borrowed more to make his burial service so special.

***Atsede, UK/Eritrea***

We have lost 3 people in one weekend. All these funerals come with burial expenses, travel and my mother a widow herself is exhausted from the responsibility. I try to support her from afar but I think the time has come for us to mourn our dead in private as a family because we cannot afford to host the extended families anymore.

***Anonymous, Uk***

Last year my mother died in Sierra Leone and I had to go for her funeral. Despite most mourners knowing that I am in medical school (which it self carries a high financial responsibility), I had to buy plane tickets, pay for funeral expenses, and spend a lot on the mourners themselves. When I paid for a particular cow, some of the "elders" suggested that I buy a bigger and healthier cow. Later I was suprised to see that most of them took portions of the meat to their homes leaving me with the responsibility of spending extra on buying more food for the mourners who were already at home. Furthermore, I had to provide breakfast, lunch and dinner for the mourners as long as I was there - three weeks. At the end of the ceremonies, I had to charter vehicles to take most of the mourners who had come from various places around the country. Time and space will not even permit me here to go into the unecessary spending for some "traditional ceremonies" as if they have any bearing on my relationship with the deceased. On returning to the US, my finances were and are still in such bad shape and I had to leave school for lack of finances.

***Innocent Monya-Tambi, USA***

My mother has long been a believer in C.C.C.'s - cardboard collapsible coffins. She either wants to be cremated in that, or a plain, cheap pine coffin when she dies. Maybe some entrepreneur can start a business in Africa with this idea. No land lost from a burial, and it won't break the bank.

***Russell, UK***

When my brother died suddenly last year, I opted for the most simplistic of ceremonies. Of course tradition was followed, but, whereas the family heads wanted an outlandish ceremony with all the trimmings, and for as many people to attend, my mother and i opted for a more subtle service. I feel that sometimes families allow the opinions of others to cloud their judgement, just so that they don't get shamed or be the laughing stock of the community. Funerals are costly where ever you may be, but when families opt to hire musicians, do "takeaway" for guests and change mourning attire three to four times a day (to show off the latest fashions), then this is asking for trouble! As the old adage goes, "Cut your coat according to your size".

***Jeff Boateng, UK / Ghana***

By the time you are sick relatives hardly pass to sympathise. By the time you die they are there as relatives only with the intention of asking how to celebrate the dead. Feasting should be banned

***Awasume Ngalle, Cameroon/USA***

My uncle died seven years ago. I am now in America, but my relatives expect me to travel to Ethiopia for the seventh year feasting.

***Wendu Regassa, Awash/Ethiopia***

Absolutely, It's amazing how much attention is given to death and not enough to life itself.

***Yogini Patel, USA***

Sometimes a corpse will be deposited in the mortuary for over six months just to allow time for preparations, the end point being the impoverishment of the bereaved who just wanted to meet societal expectations. It's got to stop, please my fellow Africans.

***Okechukwu Ndunagum, Nigeria***

Some African parents spent little on raising their children many of whom are very successful. It is with this simplified dignity that they would want to be sent off from this world.

***Nji, USA/Cameroon***

Some people are forced to spend all they have on a funeral and the aftermath is lack of food and other basic necessity.

***Elton Nyema, Liberia***

Every race, nation, people and continent has a tradition to distinguish itself from the rest of the world so why Africa and African's way of life be considered and question as abnormal?

***s.wellington keah jnr., ghana***

These days when you receive news of the death of a close relative, it's simply asking you to contribute not to attend. If mourners go to a funeral with an empty stomach, and leave complaining they should ask themselves what they actually brought other than their empty stomachs.

***Lokule Edward Yengi, Uganda***

Personally I believe that more time should be spent comforting than coming to enjoy the food and drinks.

***Akwensioge Martin, Cameroon-USA***

What I cannot understand is our unwillingness to spend money on the sick, but we go out of our way to borrow money to put on

elaborate and costly funerals. If anybody can explain this to me then I can make my mind on the subject under debate.

***Kwaku , Serbia***

I am sure my country Nigeria is worst heat with this epidemic. Its terrible to see burial done as a carnival and show of affluence.

***okey james, nigeria***

While I agree that the cost of funerals are too high, I will also point to the cost of weddings which cost five to ten times more than funerals. At least the dead person is buried once, while some people get married three, four, sometimes five times in their lifetime. So you tell me, which is more expensive and wasteful?

***Joe Woyee, USA (Liberian)***

Expenses incurred for funeral, memorial and wedding ceremonies, under the good cover of preserving tradition, have always worried me much. Let alone these, we have to also think about our unnecessary holiday expenses, in a multi-cultural but poor county like mine.

***Dawro Konta, Japan/Ethiopia***

In some Uganda tribes when a man dies they are supposed to stay out of work for eight days. A woman's death demands four days. That's wastage of time. In addition the mourners eat all the food of the bereaved. The customs can stay, but they should not lead to wastage of our meager resources.

***Elias Mutungi, Uganda/USA***

When my Aunt died we flew down to Nigeria with a very heavy heart. But the situation became unbearable for me when I witnessed the high level of harassments and multiple demands on my mother for various things ranging from food, drinks and money, all in the name of traditional funeral requirements. The sad news is that majority of these mourners did not even know her (Auntie) personally, but had the right to place demands.

***Chukwudi Odogwu, Onitsha/Nigeria***

It is not only in Africa but in my country Haiti, the practice is widespread and it has worsened over the past ten years. Not too long ago, mourners were served with tea and bread but now funerals are big feasts.

***Lucson Pierre-Charles, Haiti***

My friend is one of those unfortunate enough to lose the bread winner of the family at a very tender age. She was barely 15, the oldest of a family of 6 and as the culture demands she prepared a

decent meal for the mourners. After the funeral they did not see the mourners nor smell their breath. She withdrew from school and presently she is selling at the market to help her mother raise the other children.

**Ekan, Nigeria**

Prayers and material assistance are all that's needed to make a burial ceremony a success.

**Dauda Kajuna, Tanzania**

Anybody hoping to come to my parents funeral for eating and drinking will be disappointed.

**Peter Kabeji, Nigeria**

Go it the Islamic way. No unnecessary expenses incurred. It is just a simple funeral function

**Baguma Ismail, Tanzania**

It's not how much we spend at funerals but what motivates us to spend as we do. Uniformity in the funeral rituals cannot solve the African problem since classes are undeniably existent in our societies. I would say it is high time we exercised benevolence. Our attitude should be to bring peace not chaos. We who go for an African funeral should not just go empty handed. Take a little gift with you and together our gifts will be multiplied. In short we need to judge right at a particular funeral.

**Ignatius.T.Peter, Zimbabwe**

For Africans to be banned from mourning their loved ones because the practice is 'wasteful' is ridiculous and unfair. Certainly there should be more individual choice, but people in all parts of the world should be able to mourn as they see fit.

**Seyi Soremekun, UK**

Burial ceremonies in Benin City, mid-west Nigeria have involved from the traditional 7 to 3 three days duration. Though some traditionalist still adhere to the 7 days. Burial Ceremonies now serves as the only opportunity for the people to enjoy themselves. They dress up, drink, dance and just have fun. It is our answer to the vacation that people enjoy in the west. Burial ceremonies has become big business in Benin City, Nigeria. It employs many youths, and provides an avenue for families to spend money to oil the local economy. It should be encouraged

**E.O Agho, Lagos, Nigeria**

Tradition should not be static but dynamic to fit with the times. My friend's father died and the children could not bury him because his

family said he had not yet given his father a 'befitting' burial! His kids paid morgue costs for 6 months before he was finally buried!

**Ibiyemi, London UK/Nigeria**

Funerals are relevant in bringing family members together. However the over-spending is through lack of wisdom and understanding.

**Cooler, Ghana**

We should also realise that when someone is dead they will NOT come back. The funeral should take the minimum time and expense - a practical matter of committing dust to dust.

**Farayi, Zimbabwe**

With or without these kind of ceremonies, Africa's problems are different. Hands off our culture.

**Godfrey siu Etyang, Uganda**

My heart says respect the people's culture while my head says stop wasting scarce resources. Maybe the Christians and Traditionalists need to borrow a leaf from Moslems - they don't engage in expensive funerals and they are still Africans. It's time Africans started focusing on developmental issues and not consumption, consumption, consumption.....

**Chimex, Lagos, Nigeria**

With the high death rate the duration of funerals should be cut from the average three days to even one or two. Where it is the family breadwinner who has died, the cost of an elaborate funeral places a heavy burden on the family.

**Eveline Chikwanha, Zimbabwe**

There is no need to buy beers and other kinds of alcoholic drinks which are expensive. Besides the brothers and sisters in faith actively contribute to the funeral expenses.

**Ongol Martin, Uganda/Japan**

My tradition is that when the head of the family departs slaughter an ox. When the wife dies slaughter a cow. The hides are used to inter. When any child dies use a blanket (ukusonga). That is not expensive. It becomes ridiculous when the present generation starts parting, that's no longer tradition but corrupted custom by Western influence. Funeral gatherings were there for comforting and counselling the close relatives.

**Robin Jobela, Zimbabwe**

Is putting up with appearances worth leaving your family destitute and hungry?

***Julia, Gambia/USA***

We are not saying bury our loved ones without dignity - we are saying let those who remain live in dignity! The big question - what is the price on 'dignity'?

***Lite Otoo, Ghana***

According to my experience in Ethiopia the church leaders impose this cultural practice on its followers. However people in the community are encouraged to contribute towards the funeral celebration expenses in the form of money or food kind. The cost of casket, clothings and burial ground will be the responsibility of the deceased family. This is the practice of the Evangelical Church followers in Ethiopia.

***Hailu, USA***

Family members should decide how much they can afford without creating unnecessary hardships for the widow and orphans.

***E.M. Pamberi, Zimbabwe/USA***

It is bad to feast at funerals here in africa, because the standard of living is below zero. Its not good to force a family which has lost a member to buy or slaughter a cow or a goat just to please people who came to share sorrow with them.

***Josef Nkhwangwa, Malawi***

Those yearning to fill up their bellies keep away! Funerals are not banquets

***Michael, Khartoum/Sudan***

All of our spare money must be used for the care of the many children left behind by their parents.

***Kenneth Mac Kay, South Africa***

This year alone, I have lost three relatives, two in March and one in November. It has been very hectic and very unfair on my income. What I spent on the funerals could have bought me a plot of land. I really agree with the Anglican Bishop from Uganda that the practice of feasting at a funeral should stop.

***Enock Magolah, Malawi***

Where possible funeral policies should give exact specifications of how the funeral should be handled. If not, everyone should make his wish to known to the relatives on what kind of funeral he/she wishes considering the available resources.

***Takotama Maenzanise, Zimbabwe***

It is common here in Zambia to spend lavishly at the funeral when



the person passes on. Relatives such as the uncles, aunties, nephews etc would each volunteer willingly to buy requisites such as coffin, blankets, clothes and foods - kindness that was never shown when the person lived.

**Kennedy Mulenga, Zambia**

What a topic! Other countries in the West and Asia keep to their burial practices. Why not Africans!

**bala, usa/nigeria**

Feast and funeral are part of African culture. In Yorubaland where I came from, it is not compulsory for the celebrants to do an elaborate party or to slaughter cow. The ceremony can even be postponed for coming generations who can afford it. We prefer to celebrate the separation of life from death with pomp and pageantry. The whole world is doing it but in different forms. The Yoruba believe that any step taken along the line should not be a burden on the celebrants. Everything needs to be done with moderation. I believe in that also.

**Adeolu, Germany**

Banning it would not be the solution. Instead community and religious leaders can help in stimulating discussions to help solve this dilemma. It is becoming more acute now with poverty levels and the mortality rate so high.

**Cliffon Bobe, Malawi**

African culture demanded that the dead be given a befitting traditional funeral. Western culture and the commercialisation of life has absolutely corrupted the funeral rite and culture of burial customs.

**Zuma Biko, South Africa**

How can the well-being of the living be ensured when that which supports life, such as a cow, is taken away?

**David Tonghou, Cameroon/USA**

The social aspect of the gatherings at times of funeral is an important cultural consideration. Sadly, it has become little more than a drinking and gluttonous party.

**Frank Tjongarero, Namibia**

Getting together in such time is important BUT it is a good idea to limit the expenditure by contributing our resources towards meeting the cost of funeral.

**Emmanuel Ongee, Sudan/Australia**

In Nigeria it is not unusual for a father or mother who had been buried many years before to be "turned over" by an offspring who

could not afford to give a "befitting" funeral party at the time of the parent's death.

**Joe Ann Arbor, Michigan, USA/Nigeria**

We spend too much money and time on funerals and feasting. Today we also spend too much money and time on wedding ceremonies and send-off parties.

**Dr. Peter W. Mtakwa, Tanzania**

People in the West suffer so much from loneliness in their individualistic societies. A good deal of them probably need a milk cow slaughtered to get back the sense of family and community they live without in their materialistic existence.

**Guy, Johannesburg**

In Ethiopia a funeral doesn't go on for days it lasts for years. There's months of mourning followed by monthly remembrance ceremonies where feasts are prepared for families or the church. At times a hundred people will need to be fed. The surviving families are sometimes left with nothing by the time the whole thing is over. There's no way I can think that is right.

**Liku Z., Ethiopia**

Funerals in Africa have now become a show. Ideally, the whole essence of gathering at the deceased home up to burial time was for the sole purpose of offering comfort to the beareaved family. Now it is all about the best casket or coffin and good food being demanded by those who have come to offer you comfort.

**Victoria, Zambia**

We spend alot to start the next stage of life, but at the end of the day the family is left with nothing. Yet the dead will never mind what goes on behind.

**Dolorence, Kenya**

Couldn't agree more with the Ugandan Bishop. We really must give up that unbearable tradition.

**Sítoe, Mozambique**

As the Swahili saying goes who forgets culture is like a slave. Yet if we continue to spend money any how, Africa will continue to be poor.

**Andrew Oluoch, Italy**

Among my people, the Binis of Mid-Western Nigeria, average traditional burials last 7 days, with feasting and dancing. This undermines savings and productive investment, according to modern day analysts. What they fail to recognise is that thousands of jobs

are created in the funeral-associated industries with all the economic benefits.

***Peter, Nigeria***

It is only as I read this that I learn other African countries spend even more than we do in Ethiopia. When I saw that the son of a widow slaughtered the only milk cow he "owned" I was really sorry from the bottom of my heart. Yes we should bring the cost down and I would say we should do the same for weddings too.

***Tesfaye Haile, Ethiopia***

What a wonderful debate! Death is the final celebration. It should be celebrated with honour. How much you spend is not the issue.

***Daniel Kibaga, Kenya***

The sad reality is that funerals are the only occasion when many individuals can have access to a half-decent meal. It is therefore not a cultural phenomenon, but simply a manifestation of abject poverty - a condition which dehumanises its victims in a way that so offends our shared values as members of the human family. If only the gulf between our rulers and our people were not as wide as it currently is.

***UE, UK/Nigeria***

Feasting at funerals should be banned. A lot of people who attend are only interested in filling their bellies and care nothing for the deceased.

***Masaaba Mwambu, Canada/Uganda***

Memorial services that go on for up to 2 years are costly considering the incomes of majority of the households. Nevertheless the cost burden is shared among the immediate family.

***Yitatek Yitbarek, Ethiopian /South Africa***

Too much time is wasted on consultations, agreeing on burial sites, dates, programmes, flowers or no flowers, testimonies, oh my! All the above is done alongside eating and feasting no matter how long it takes and how much it costs!

***Harrahs Malinda, Kenya/Germany***

We care more for the dead than the living, that is why we spend too much burying the dead.

***Mmabaledi Maboka, Botswana***

Many people are dying in Africa because of HIV/AIDS. As a result funerals have become very expensive for poor families. We need to reverse or change this tradition.

**Francesca Liswaniso, Zimbabwe**

I am sure the dead will be crying and wailing when they look from their grave and see the atrocities committed in the name of a befitting burial ceremony? By the way who are we feasting for???

**Emmanuel, Nigeria**

As a missionary serving in Africa for more than 20 years, we have seen the detrimental effects of expensive funeral feasts. The lack of a feast does not mean a lack of love and respect for the departed loved one.

**David W. Restrict, Mozambique**

We have a similar problem in the USA. People think you are disrespectful of the dead if you don't break the bank. Our funerals cost about \$7,000 to \$10,000 and that's average... no frills.

**Ron Allen, USA**

Funerals are part of our tradition. Funerals remind the living of who they are and act as a platform to foster peace between families and the community. In recent times families sought to fashion their long traditional beliefs around western cultures, hence the high cost of late. I strongly believe that we should spend more money on our people's needs before they died.

**Nancy Sarpong, Ghana**

AIDS is making everybody poorer so why not save money for the people left behind with the bills.

**Musa, USA**

I come from the southern part of Nigeria. We spend far too on funerals.

**Muyiwa, Nigeria**

In the eastern part of Nigeria some people have to keep corpses of dead relatives in the morgue for several months, while they save up for the funeral. And it takes longer if the dead was a title holder. Ironical that we would use the money from the living in sending the dead to eternity.

**M. Patrick, Nigeria**

It is not the issue of caring more for the dead but the issue of feasting, boasting and show-off.

**Minja, Tanzania/USA**

In my community people contribute to take care of the funeral expenses and what remains from the contributions is given to the bereaved family for their upkeep. Elaborate funeral feasting should

be done away with.

***Esther, Kenya***

When my father was severely disabled falling from a palm tree, very few people outside the immediate family paid him a visit while in hospital. With the little money saved from his agrarian lifestyle, we could not afford the expensive surgery. When he died, we were penniless. Being a prince, everyone expected a lavish funeral service. Little did people remember that the protracted illness had ruined us financially. Some people even expected gifts for attending the funeral service or cry-die. It left me indebted for years.

***Mart, Cameroon***

That a funeral ceremony should cost more than the deceased ever spent, let alone earned, in his or her entire life is absurd.

***Lillian, Germany***

If there is any part of Africa where burying the dead is unbearably costly, it is among the Igbo people of Nigeria. Cases abound where the dead person, while alive, was not provided food or anything to keep body and soul moving. But at death, the relatives, in order to please the mourning public, will not only buy an expensive casket for the final journey, but also spend a whooping amount of money to engage musicians and comedians to entertain people. It is the belief of some people that the dead may hunt the living if a befitting burial is not given. Or that ill-luck will come to the deceased's family. Some people use the occasion to show off their wealth. I don't think Muslims engage in such expensive burials.

***Jude Odinkonigbo, Enugu/Nigeria***

Thanks to the religious leaders of Eritrea, a mechanism has been put in place to encourage families to donate whatever amount they apportion for the social rites surrounding a funeral to go to a charity. The announcement is made on state media for everyone to hear. I believe that this Eritrean experience could help in Uganda and other parts of Africa.

***Habtom Z.G., Eritrea***

Not only do we spend alot on feeding the mourners but also on lost man hours. The average number of mourners at a burial is 100. Multiply that by say 50 funerals a day you have 5,000 people half of whom are supposed to be at work.

***Chande Kapundu, Zambia***

The forefathers were not so smart as to envisage what will happen in 200 years. The continued existence of culture depends on change. Ask the King of Spain.

**James Stewart, USA**

"Let the dead take care of the dead and the living take care of the living". Too many families run themselves into debt in order to provide a good "send off". In many countries, including England, good farming land accomodates the dead. Look at the size of the cemeteries around London!

**Peter W. Pearce, USA/UK**

I think some stratgies of dealing with expensive funerals could be the adoption of alternatives methods of interment such as cremation and interring the deceased within a week of their death.

**Michael Kamuyu, Kenya/New Zealand**

Let it be made into law that anyone who spends over 2% of his/her annual income on a funeral will pay a fine 10 times the amount. This will put pretenders in their place who use the untimely departure of a relative for personal show-off.

**A. Sayku Kromah, United States of America**

Banning is counter-productive, education is the key. This practice has been there from time immemorial. Mourners themselves could help by bringing anything edible. Another way might be for the chiefs to take charge during funerals and ask the people to contribute.

**Paul Kudinha, Zimbabwe**

It is wise to spend time and money in saving lives rather than feasting in funerals.

**Romeo Kiranga, Kenya**

I'm glad this topic has eventually come up for debate. I come from a community that spends lavishly on funerals. The festivities we hold are a travesty of the whole act of mourning. Most people are ready to spend on funeral festivities, yet unwilling to support the bereaved family sustain themselves. The expenditure on these funerals could help fill the financial gap left by the deceased

**James Oburu Rao, Kenya**

When I was working in Nigeria, I lost a staff member to AIDS and it made me angry to see how his widow was treated in terms of taking goods and money to pay for his burial. The living need this money to survive, especially if the person that has died is the one who brought food to the table.

**Wendy, Afghanistan**

In Ghana corpses may lie in mortuaries for weeks for all family members to gather. State-of-the-art coffins, flowers, posters

announcing the funeral, souvenirs such as t-shirts are all costly. Everyone who comes to the funeral, which may last several days, must be served with food and drinks. The immediate family have to buy special cloth. Among the Ashantis, there is another gathering on the 40th day and one-year anniversaries. Can't Africans find ways to give our deceased ones honor without having to put their surviving families in debt?

**Richard Adjei, Toronto, Canada**

It might sound costly, but it is the least we can do.

**Sammy, USA**

It's a foolish tradition. People get so desperate, that they do not care where the money comes from.

**Ehindero Ayo Mike, Nigeria**

It takes too long to bury a dead person. Let us learn something from the Moslems. It should only take 1 to 3 days. Also I think the elders should not burden the family too much with their advice and I think burial places have become too much of a camping place for people waiting for hand-outs. I know these are sensitive issues, but we who are youths should mark the way forward.

**Nyamunga Josephth, Nairobi Kenya**

It's sad to see families borrowing money for funeral celebrations and the hospital bill even left unpaid and the families left with huge debts.

**Casianus, Cameroon/UK**

If you can afford it give your parents a fitting funeral. But if you can not afford it, don't bother.

**Solade Nicol, Canada**

Funeral rites are a sign of last respect to a loved one. Each culture has its own ways of sending a departed one to the land of the spirits and gods. Why must we always attach a material value to everything? The amount spent does not matter. No one will leave this Earth with anything!

**Mil Polo, USA/Kenya**

Some local families have become a little more pragmatic. I know of a case where a family has had three deaths in one year. For the first funeral they were required to slaughter two cattle and two sheep. By the time they got to the third funeral they were required only to slaughter two sheep. Question remains at what cost? This family was already impoverished as the main breadwinner had lost his job two years previously. A lot needs to be changed, but this is an issue that will require almost as big a mind shift as safe sex education


***Richard Austin, South Africa***


My family went through that spending spree when we lost our parents. We maintained the so-called culture because of the voices of the public not for the dead. Those who cannot afford it, go deep into debt just to satisfy others.

***Henry Williams, Sierra Leone/New York***

This is not about caring for the dead or the living. It is an opportunity to waste resources.

***Precious Coker, canada***

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